

# Southern Min

**Southern Min** or **Minnan** (simplified Chinese: 闽南语; traditional Chinese: 閩南語; lit.: 'Southern Fujian language'), is a group of linguistically similar and historically related Sinitic languages that form a branch of Min Chinese spoken in Fujian (especially the Minnan region), most of Taiwan (many citizens are descendants of settlers from Fujian), Eastern Guangdong, Hainan and Southern Zhejiang.<sup>[8]</sup> The Minnan dialects are also spoken by descendants of emigrants from these areas in diaspora, most notably the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and New York City. It is the largest Min Chinese branch and the most widely distributed Min Chinese subgroup.

In common parlance and in the narrower sense, Southern Min refers to the Quanzhang or Hokkien-Taiwanese variety of Southern Min originating from Southern Fujian in Mainland China. This is spoken mainly in Fujian, Taiwan, as well as certain parts of Southeast Asia. The Quanzhang variety is often called simply "Minnan Proper" (simplified Chinese: 闽南语; traditional Chinese: 閩南語 ). It is considered the mainstream Southern Min Chinese Language.

In the wider scope, Southern Min also includes other Min Chinese varieties that are linguistically related to Minnan proper (Quanzhang). Most variants of Southern Min have significant differences from the Quanzhang variety, some having limited mutual intelligibility with it, others almost none. Teochew, Longyan, and Zhenan may be said to have limited mutual intelligibility with Minnan Proper, sharing similar phonology and vocabulary to a small extent. On the other hand, variants such as Datian, Zhongshan, and Qiong-Lei have historical linguistic roots with Minnan Proper, but are significantly divergent from it in terms of phonology and vocabulary, and thus have almost no mutual intelligibility with the Quanzhang variety. Linguists tend to classify them as separate Min languages.

Southern Min is not mutually intelligible with other branches of Min Chinese nor with non-Min varieties of Chinese, such as Mandarin.

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## Geographic distribution

Southern Min	
Minnan	
閩南語 / 闽南语	
<span></span> <div>Koa-a books, Minnan written in Chinese characters</div>	
Native to	Mainland China, Taiwan
Region	Fujian Province; the Chaozhou-Shantou (Chaoshan) area and Leizhou Peninsula in Guangdong Province; extreme south of Zhejiang Province; much of Hainan Province ( <i>if Hainanese or Qiongwen is included</i> ) and most of Taiwan as well as Penang, Melaka, Singapore and Sumatra
Ethnicity	Hoklo people Teochew people Hainanese people
Native speakers	48 million (2020) <sup>[1]</sup>
Language family	<div>Sino-Tibetan <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li> Sinitic<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Min<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Coastal Min<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Southern Min</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></div>
Dialects	Quanzhang (Hokkien) (e.g. Amoy, Taiwanese) Chaoshan (Teo-Swa) (e.g. Teochew, Swatow) Longyan Zhenan Datian (disputed) Zhongshan (disputed, some may be Eastern Min)
Writing system	Chinese

Mainland China

Southern Min dialects are spoken in Fujian, three southeastern counties of Zhejiang, the Zhoushan archipelago off Ningbo in Zhejiang and the Chaoshan (Teo-swa) region in Guangdong. The variant spoken in Leizhou, Guangdong as well as Hainan is Hainanese and is not mutually intelligible with mainstream Southern Min or Teochew. Hainanese is classified in some schemes as part of Southern Min and in other schemes as separate. Puxian Min was originally based on the Quanzhou dialect, but over time became heavily influenced by Eastern Min, eventually losing intelligibility with Minnan.

Taiwan

The Southern Min dialects spoken in Taiwan, collectively known as Taiwanese, is a first language for most of the Hoklo people, the main ethnicity of Taiwan. The correspondence between language and ethnicity is not absolute, as some Hoklo have very limited proficiency in Southern Min while some non-Hoklo speak Southern Min fluently.<sup>[9]</sup>

Southeast Asia

There are many Southern Min speakers among overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. Many ethnic Chinese immigrants to the region were Hoklo from southern Fujian and brought the language to what is now Burma, Indonesia (the former Dutch East Indies) and present-day Malaysia and Singapore (formerly British Malaya and the Straits Settlements). In general, Southern Min from southern Fujian is known as Hokkien, Hokkienese, Fukien or Fookien in Southeast Asia and is mostly mutually intelligible with Hokkien spoken elsewhere. Many Southeast Asian ethnic Chinese also originated in the Chaoshan region of Guangdong and speak Teochew language, the variant of Southern Min from that region. Philippine Hokkien is reportedly the native language of up to 98.5% of the Chinese Filipino community in the Philippines, among whom it is also known as Lan-nang or Lán-lâng-oē (咱儂話), literally "our people's language".

Southern Min speakers form the majority of Chinese in Singapore, with Hokkien being the largest group and the second largest being Teochew. Despite the similarities, the two groups are rarely seen as part of the same "Minnan" Chinese subgroups.

Classification

The variants of Southern Min spoken in Zhejiang province are most akin to that spoken in Quanzhou. The variants spoken in Taiwan are similar to the three Fujian variants and are collectively known as Taiwanese.

Those Southern Min variants that are collectively known as "Hokkien" in Southeast Asia also originate from these variants. The variants of Southern Min in the Chaoshan region of eastern Guangdong province are collectively known as Teo-Swa or Chaoshan. Chaoshan Min is of great importance in the Southeast Asian Chinese diaspora, particularly in Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Sumatra, and West Kalimantan. The Philippines variant is mostly from the Quanzhou area as most of their forefathers are from the aforementioned area.

The Southern Min language variant spoken around Shanwei and Haifeng differs markedly from Teochew and may represent a later migration from Zhangzhou. Linguistically, it lies between Teochew and Amoy. In southwestern Fujian, the local variants in Longyan and Zhangping form a separate division of Minnan on their own. Among ethnic Chinese inhabitants of Penang, Malaysia and Medan, Indonesia, a distinct form based on the Zhangzhou dialect has developed. In Penang, it is called Penang Hokkien while across the Malacca Strait in Medan, an almost identical variant is known as Medan Hokkien.

Varieties

There are three major divisions of Southern Min :

	characters, Latin
Official status	
Official language in	None <sup>[a]</sup>
Regulated by	None (The Republic of China Ministry of Education and some NGOs are influential in Taiwan)
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	nan
Glottolog	minn1241 ( <a href="http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/minn1241">http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/minn1241</a> ) <sup>[7]</sup>
Linguasphere	79-AAA-j
<div></div> <div><div></div> Southern Min in China and Taiwan</div>	
<div></div> <div>Southern Min Languages</div> <div><div></div> Hokkiettochuan (Hongkong, Singapore, Indonesia, ...)</div> <div><div></div> Teo-Swa(Teochew and Swatow)</div> <div><div></div> Zhangpu Min</div> <div><div></div> Dorian Min</div> <div><div></div> Zheuan Min</div>	

Subgroups of Southern Min in China and Taiwan

Chinese name	
Simplified Chinese	闽南语
Traditional Chinese	閩南語
Literal meaning	"Language of Southern Min [Fujian]"
Transcriptions	
Standard Mandarin	
Hanyu Pinyin	Mǐnnán yǔ
Wade–Giles	Min <sup>3</sup> -nan <sup>2</sup> yǔ <sup>3</sup>
IPA	[mɪnnǎn̩ ỳ]
Gan	
Romanization	Mîn-lōm-ngî
Hakka	

Subgroups of Southern Min in China and Taiwan

- Minnan Proper (Hokkien–Taiwanese) under the Quanzhang division (泉漳片)
- Teochew under the Chaoshan division (潮汕片)
- Leizhou and Hainanese dialects under the Qiong-Lei division (琼雷片).

More recently, Kwok (2018: 157)<sup>[10]</sup> has classified the Southern Min dialects the Central and Southern branches grouped together, as well as a separate divergent Northern branch.

#### Southern Min

- **Northern**
  - Cangnan
  - Quanzhou, Zihu, Lukang
- **Central-Southern**
  - **Central**
    - Zhangzhou
    - Longyan, Datian
  - **Southern**
    - Guangdong
      - ? Haifeng
      - Jieyang, Chaoyang
    - Hainan
      - Leizhou
      - Haikou

Romanization	Mîn-nàm-ngî
<b>Yue: Cantonese</b>	
Yale Romanization	Máhn-nàahm yúh
Jyutping	Man <sup>5</sup> -naam <sup>4</sup> jyu <sup>5</sup>
<b>Southern Min</b>	
Hokkien POJ	Bân-lâm-gí/Bân-lâm-gú
<b>Eastern Min</b>	
Fuzhou BUC	Mìng-nàng-ngŭ
<b>Northern Min</b>	
Jian'ou	Mǎing-nâng-ngŭ
Romanized	

### Quanzhang (Hokkien)

The group of mutually intelligible Quanzhang (泉漳片) dialects, spoken around the areas of Xiamen, Quanzhou and Zhangzhou in Southern Fujian, collectively called Minnan Proper (闽南语/闽南话) or Hokkien-Taiwanese, is the mainstream form of Southern Min. It is also the widely spoken non-official regional language in Taiwan. There are two types of standard Minnan. They are classified as Traditional Standard Minnan and Modern Standard Minnan. Traditional Standard Minnan is based on the Quanzhou dialect. It is the dialect used in Liyuan Opera (梨园戏) and Nanying music (南音). The modern standard forms of Minnan Proper are based on Amoy dialect, spoken in the city of Xiamen, and Taiwanese dialect, spoken around the city of Tainan in Taiwan. Both modern standard forms of Minnan are a combination of Quanzhou and Zhangzhou speech. Nowadays, Modern Standard Minnan is the dialect of Minnan that is popular in Minnan dialect television programming, radio programming and Minnan songs. Most Minnan language books and Minnan dictionaries are mostly based on the pronunciation of the Modern Standard Minnan. Taiwanese in northern Taiwan tends to be based on Quanzhou dialect, whereas the Taiwanese spoken in southern Taiwan tends to be based on Zhangzhou dialect. There are minor variations in pronunciation and vocabulary between Quanzhou and Zhangzhou speech. The grammar is basically the same. Additionally, in Taiwanese Minnan, extensive contact with the Japanese language has left a legacy of Japanese loanwords. This language is also spoken in Singapore, as Singaporean Hokkien, which has English and Malay loanwords.

### Chaoshan (Teo-Swa)

Teo-Swa or Chaoshan speech (潮汕片) is a closely related variant of Minnan that includes the Teochew and Swatow dialects. It has limited mutual intelligibility with Quanzhang speech, though they share some cognates with each other. Chaoshan Min is significantly different from Quanzhang in both pronunciation and vocabulary. It had its origins from the Proto-Putian dialect (闽南语古莆田话), a sub-dialect of Proto-Minnan, which is closely related to the Quanzhou dialect. As the Proto-Putian dialect speaking Chinese emigrants from Putian prefecture settled in the Chaoshan region, it later received influence from the Zhangzhou dialect. It follows the same grammar pattern as Minnan Proper. It is marginally understood by Minnan Proper speakers.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Phonology

Southern Min has one of the most diverse phonologies of Chinese varieties, with more consonants than Mandarin or Cantonese. Vowels, on the other hand, are more-or-less similar to those of Mandarin. In general, Southern Min dialects have five to six tones, and tone sandhi is extensive. There are minor variations within Hokkien, and the Teochew system differs somewhat more.

Southern Min's nasal finals consist of /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, and /~/.

## Writing systems

Both Hokkien and Chaoshan (Teochew and Shantou dialects) have romanized writing systems. Hokkien is also written in modified Chinese characters.

## History

The Min homeland of Fujian was opened to Chinese settlement by the defeat of the Minyue state by the armies of Emperor Wu of Han in 110 BC.<sup>[12]</sup> The area features rugged mountainous terrain, with short rivers that flow into the South China Sea. Most subsequent migration from north to south China passed through the valleys of the Xiang and Gan rivers to the west, so that Min varieties have experienced less northern influence than other southern groups.<sup>[13]</sup> As a result, whereas most varieties of Chinese can be treated as derived from Middle Chinese, the language described by rhyme dictionaries such as the Qieyun (601 AD), Min varieties contain traces of older distinctions.<sup>[14]</sup> Linguists estimate that the oldest layers of Min dialects diverged from the rest of Chinese around the time of the Han dynasty.<sup>[15][16]</sup> However, significant waves of migration from the North China Plain occurred.<sup>[17]</sup> These include:

- The Uprising of the Five Barbarians during the Jin dynasty, particularly the Disaster of Yongjia in 311 AD, caused a tide of immigration to the south.
- In 669, Chen Zheng and his son Chen Yuanguang from Gushi County in Henan set up a regional administration in Fujian to suppress an insurrection by the She people.
- Wang Chao, also from Gushi, moved south to Fujian and was appointed its governor in 893, near the end of the Tang dynasty, and brought tens of thousands of troops from Henan. In 909, following the fall of the Tang dynasty, his younger brother Wang Shenzhi founded the Min Kingdom, one of the Ten Kingdoms in the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period.

Jerry Norman identifies four main layers in the vocabulary of modern Min varieties:

1. A non-Chinese substratum from the original languages of Minyue, which Norman and Mei Tsu-lin believe were Austroasiatic.<sup>[18][19]</sup>
2. The earliest Chinese layer, brought to Fujian by settlers from Zhejiang to the north during the Han dynasty.<sup>[20]</sup>
3. A layer from the Northern and Southern Dynasties period, which is largely consistent with the phonology of the Qieyun dictionary.<sup>[21]</sup>
4. A literary layer based on the koiné of Chang'an, the capital of the Tang dynasty.<sup>[22]</sup>

## Comparisons with Sino-Xenic character pronunciations

Minnan (or Hokkien) can trace its origins through the Tang Dynasty, and it also has roots from earlier periods. Minnan (Hokkien) people call themselves "Tang people", (唐人, pronounced as "唐儂" *Tâṅ-lâng*) which is synonymous to "Chinese people". Because of the widespread influence of the Tang culture during the great Tang dynasty, there are today still many Minnan pronunciations of words shared by the Sino-xenic pronunciations of Vietnamese, Korean and Japanese languages.

English	Han characters	Mandarin Chinese	Taiwanese Minnan <sup>[23]</sup>	Teochew	Cantonese	Korean	Vietnamese	Japanese
Book	冊	cè	<i>Chhek/Chheh</i>	<i>cêh4</i>	<i>caak3</i>	<i>Chaek</i> (책)	<i>Sách</i>	<i>Saku/Satsu/Shaku</i>
Bridge	橋	<i>qiáo</i>	<i>Kiâu/Kiô</i>	<i>giê5</i>	<i>kiu4</i>	<i>Gyo</i> (교)	<i>Cầu</i>	<i>Kyô</i>
Dangerous	危險	<i>wēixiǎn/wéixiǎn</i>	<i>Guí-hiám</i>	<i>guĩn5/nguĩn5 hiem2</i>	<i>ngai4 him2</i>	<i>Wiheom</i> (위험)	<i>Nguy hiễm</i>	<i>Kiken</i>
Embassy	大使館	<i>Dàshǐguǎn</i>	<i>Tāi-sài-koán</i>	<i>dai6 sái2 guêng2</i>	<i>daai6 si3 gun2</i>	<i>Daesagwan</i> (대사관)	<i>Đại Sứ Quán</i>	<i>Taishikan</i>
Flag	旗	<i>Qí</i>	<i>Kî</i>	<i>kî5</i>	<i>kei4</i>	<i>Gí</i> (기)	<i>Cờ</i>	<i>Ki</i>
Insurance	保險	<i>Bǎoxiǎn</i>	<i>Pó-hiám</i>	<i>Bó2-hiém</i>	<i>bou2 him2</i>	<i>Boheom</i> (보험)	<i>Bảo hiểm</i>	<i>Hoken</i>
News	新聞	<i>Xīnwén</i>	<i>Sin-bûn</i>	<i>sing1 bhung6</i>	<i>san1 man4</i>	<i>Shinmun</i> (신문)	<i>Tin tức</i>	<i>Shinbun</i>
Student	學生	<i>Xuéshēng</i>	<i>Hák-seng</i>	<i>Hak8 sêng1</i>	<i>hok6 saang1</i>	<i>Haksaeng</i> (학생)	<i>Học sinh</i>	<i>Gakusei</i>
University	大學	<i>Dàxué</i>	<i>Tāi-hák/Tōa-oh</i>	<i>dai6 hag8/dua7 oh8</i>	<i>daai6 hok6</i>	<i>Daehak</i> (대학)	<i>Đại học</i>	<i>Daigaku</i>

## See also

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- [Chinese in Singapore](#)
- [Languages of China](#)
- [Languages of Taiwan](#)
- [Languages of Thailand](#)
- [Malaysian Chinese](#)
- [Protection of the Varieties of Chinese](#)

## Related languages

- [Fuzhou dialect](#) (Min Dong branch)
- [Lan-nang](#) (Philippine dialect of Minnan)
- [Medan Hokkien](#) (North-Sumatra, Indonesia dialect of Minnan)
- [Penang Hokkien](#)
- [Singaporean Hokkien](#)
- [Southern Malaysia Hokkien](#)
- [Taiwanese Minnan](#)

## Notes

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- a. National language in [Taiwan](#);<sup>[2][3][4]</sup> also statutory status in Taiwan as one of the languages for public transport announcements<sup>[5]</sup> and for the [naturalization](#) test.<sup>[6]</sup>

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12. Norman (1991), pp. 328.
13. Norman (1988), pp. 210, 228.
14. Norman (1988), pp. 228–229.
15. Ting (1983), pp. 9–10.
16. Baxter & Sagart (2014), pp. 33, 79.
17. Yan (2006), p. 120.
18. Norman & Mei (1976).
19. Norman (1991), pp. 331–332.
20. Norman (1991), pp. 334–336.
21. Norman (1991), p. 336.

22. Norman (1991), p. 337.

23. Iû<sup>n</sup>, Ún-giân. "Tâi-bûn/Hôa-bûn Sòa<sup>n</sup>-téng Sû-tián" 台文/華文線頂辭典 (<http://210.240.194.97/iug/Ungian/SoannTeng/chil/Taihoa.asp>) [Taiwanese/Chinese Online Dictionary]. Retrieved 1 October 2014.

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- Voyager - Spacecraft - Golden Record - Greetings from Earth - Amoy (<http://voyager.jpl.nasa.gov/spacecraft/language/s/amoy.html>) The voyager clip says: *Thài-khong pêng-iú, lín-hó. Lín chiáh-pá--bē? Ū-êng, tóh lâi gún chia chē--ô!* 太空朋友，恁好。恁食飽未？有閒著來阮遮坐哦！
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